

very issue and we found some disgraceful situations. We found that many lawyers in the province of Quebec who could barely speak and write in English were forced, when they came before the Supreme Court of Canada, to try to write their briefs in English. They were also forced to get English speaking counsel because they knew that in that court out of nine judges there were only three or four at the most who understood French. They were put to a much greater expense and to more trouble than the English speaking lawyers and litigants. Both the English and French speaking lawyers in the province of Quebec felt this situation was extremely unjust and objected to the fact that one language group in Canada could not go to a court and expect to have justice done to them when they presented their factums, their briefs and their arguments in their own language.

● (5:50 p.m.)

They could, of course, take a chance. They could plead in French and they could present their factums in French. But they could not be sure that these would be listened to and read by all six judges of the court. In order to take no chance of losing a case, they were forced to obtain English-speaking counsel if they themselves could not speak English well enough, and then go through the laborious exercise of having all their factums and arguments translated into English.

Competency in the law is, of course, a most important criterion for the appointment of persons to the Supreme Court, but surely in this day and age it should be possible for us in Canada to pick nine men who are not only good lawyers but who are also bilingual. If we cannot do this, or at least aim toward it, there must be something wrong with this country. I do not expect we could have nine bilingual judges overnight but certainly we could work toward this goal.

There is another problem which faces French-speaking Quebec lawyers who must deal with the Supreme Court. There are many precedents which they must consult in order to prepare their cases. They must read volume after volume and judgment after judgment printed in the English language. Judges should be permitted to give judgments in whichever language they wish, I agree, but I certainly think those judgments should be well translated in order that Quebec lawyers in consulting these many precedents, could read them in the French language. I entered this debate because I believe the purpose of the courts is to dispense justice and serve the

Judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada people. Part of their competency lies in the effectiveness of their dealings with the people who are being served. And the people of this country are both English and French speaking.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I take part in this debate on the motion presented by the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) because it is a matter of principle. I have to say certain things.

However, I want to acknowledge the commendable effort of the member for Lotbinière, even if he failed, in the course of this debate, to call the members and the public's attention sufficiently to very real problems. Yet, he will have accomplished a lot by this simple gesture.

The Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) and the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cantin) have given worthwhile reasons to induce the member for Lotbinière to withdraw his motion and I agree with them.

However, I would not vote against the motion of the member for Lotbinière for the same reasons or the same motives put forward by the hon. members for Skeena and York South (Messrs. Howard and Lewis).

With due kindness, I certainly do not want to cast reflections on those hon. members nor accuse them, because I know quite well that they, at least, do not have the same background as I have. Indeed, they have not lived in a more bilingual Canada for which, however, they are both longing. I think we are still far from the entente cordiale which we are all seeking as Canadians, and I think that they have just demonstrated, by their remarks, that we have not yet reached that stage.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Corbin: I want to talk quite charitably, Mr. Speaker. I repeat that I do not want to cast reflections on those hon. members. Their background is different from mine, but their remarks indicate, however, that there is much progress to be done. They may have misinterpreted the remarks of the member for Lotbinière who tried nevertheless to be rather fair. It is perhaps because of their susceptibility of English-speaking people that they felt they were being singled out and that they thought necessary to retort as they did.